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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4857  
INFO RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 6778  
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 7675  
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ MAY LIMA 3729  
RUEHQ/AMEMBASSY QUITO 4366  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 004141

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/08/2016

TAGS: PGOV PREL PTER CO

SUBJECT: FARC BOTCHES KIDNAP OF FORMER PRESIDENT'S SISTER

REF: BOGOTA 03773

Classified By: Ambassador William B. Wood

Reasons: 1.4(a), (b), (d)

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Summary  
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¶11. (C) The GOC has presented extensive evidence implicating the FARC in the kidnapping and murder of Liliana Gaviria, sister of former Colombian President Cesar Gaviria. Of the five accused, two are under arrest. The suspects are rural combatants without urban experience. The fact that the FARC allegedly assigned this high-profile operation to them, coupled with their subsequent mishandling of the task, casts doubt on current FARC urban capabilities. End Summary.

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Ample Clues, in an Amateur Job  
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¶12. (U) Within three days of the event, clues emerged clearly pointing to the FARC as the culprits. The first lead was the kidnappers' getaway car, which was not stolen but rather registered in the real name of one of the accused. It contained the assailants' fingerprints and receipts. News of the car brought forth a neighbor who provided the killers' cell phone numbers, which were linked in police data bases to the FARC's "Teofilo Forero" Mobile Column (TFMC). Neighbors and crime witnesses identified the culprits from police albums of FARC headshots. In part the group was easily identifiable to the community because they had recently arrived from the countryside and attracted notice. A workman further showed police a human cage built to order for one of the group, who intended to transport Ms. Gaviria strapped inside it while hidden in a delivery truck. The cage, too, bore the culprits' fingerprints. Lastly, a FARC operative from the same column who had been captured the previous week confirmed the FARC's culpability.

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Arrests of FARC Culprits  
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¶13. (C) On May 3 the Fiscalia (Prosecutor General) assembled all of its evidence to issue arrest warrants against five suspects, who were announced to the press on May 4 and indicted on May 5. One of the five is reputed to be the personal bodyguard to the commander alias 'El Paisa' of the Teofilo Forero column. Three other suspects have records with links to the FARC. On May 8 and 9 the first two of the

five suspects were captured. Among possible motives for the crime were a desire to acquire a high-profile hostage to gain advantage in future humanitarian exchanges, and more immediately an intent to discredit President Uribe's platform of Democratic Security.

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Comment  
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¶4. (C) The botching of the abduction and the trail of clues leading to the perpetrators show surprising FARC clumsiness in execution of urban operations. The TFMC is reputed to be among the FARC's most skilled fronts and has been behind some of the FARC's most deft past terrorist actions, including the exfiltration of the three U.S. hostages. All the more puzzling, therefore, that TFMC sent campesino operatives unfamiliar with the city and inept at basic criminal skills to perform such a high-profile action. Moreover, any intent to weaken Uribe in the lead-up to presidential elections has only backfired by bringing the threat of terrorism to the fore of voters' minds.

WOOD